

Historic, Archive Document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

Housekeepers' Chat

Thursday, July 17, 1930.

Not for Publication

Subject: "Boning Lamb Cuts." Information from Mr. K. F. Warner, Bureau of Animal Industry, U. S. D. A.

Leaflet available: "Lamb As You Like It." Mimeographed copies of Mr. Warner's talk, illustrated.

---ooOoo---

I have here a letter from a friend in the Middle West, who has listened several times when I happened to be talking about lamb.

"I have a copy of the lamb leaflet," she writes, "and have just discovered in how many appetizing ways this meat can be prepared. In my younger days, we never had lamb --- only mutton. And as I remember, the mutton my mother served occasionally was nothing to brag about. But the lamb we get at the market nowadays is something else again, and I thank you for sending me the leaflet. Now I am wondering whether you can give us a short talk on how to bone lamb cuts. Or is boning meat a man's job? I shall be listening, for your answer."

Well, as you probably know, boning lamb cuts is not one of my specialties. But I happen to know a man in the Department of Agriculture, Mr. K. F. Warner, who has boned many a cut of lamb. Although Mr. Warner admits that boning meat is really a man's job, women can do most of it, on the smaller cuts at least. So whether you are interested in doing the boning yourself, or in telling your husband or your meat dealer how to do it, I am sure you will be glad to hear Mr. Warner tell how simple and easy it is to remove the bones from some of the lamb cuts.

"First," says Mr. Warner, "I would like to say a word about the convenience of serving or carving boneless cuts. Graceful carving is no small part of any successful meal, and such carving ordinarily requires both skill and practice. It would be interesting to know how many of you folks possess a really expert carver in your family -- one who can perform his task smoothly, and with even temper.

"One of the advantages of boneless roasts is that even the inexperienced can carve them nicely. The use of boned cuts reduces carving from the uncertain pinnacle of a dramatic art to the broad level of an accomplished virtue.

"This is particularly true of a lamb shoulder. Taking out the bone changes the problem of the carver from one of higher mathematics to simple first-grade arithmetic. All he has to do is to cut enough slices to go around.

"For boning meat, one should have a sharp knife with a narrow blade, about half an inch wide, and four or five inches long. May I add a word of warning here? Out of my experience, and that of many, many others, a good, well-sharpened knife will prove of little service if it is permitted to hang around in the kitchen

drawer, with the other knives and forks. I have seen one housewife whom I know quite well, peeling hot potatoes with a finely tempered knife, and I have seen one of the younger generation using the same instrument for digging dandelions. Even a knife that has been skillfully sharpened, can not survive such treatment. For boning, the knife must be in good condition, so that it will slide easily along the surface of the bone, cut free the muscle, slip down into the joints, and cut the sinews and tendons without gashing.

"Now, I suppose you'd like to have some definite information, about a definite cut of meat. Let's start with a shoulder of lamb. Do you like it 'cushion style'? That seems much more popular than the ordinary rolled kind. We call it cushion because it looks so plump and square when stuffed and roasted.

"It is a simple matter to bone the lamb shoulder 'cushion style'. Lamb shoulder, as cut for the retail trade, is almost as square and plump as a cushion. It contains four or five ribs, the shoulder blade, the round arm bone, and part of the neck. To bone it, lay the shoulder flat on the table, with the fat side down, and the rib side up. First, slip the knife under the edges of the ribs, and follow down along them to the neck bone. You doubtless know the reason for the name spare ribs in pork. Lamb ribs should be made just as spare, leaving as little meat on the bones as possible. Cut the ribs and the neck bones from the meat. Inside the shoulder there still remain the blade bone and the short end of the arm. The flat blade and the round shank bone form a sort of ell, that extends through the center of the shoulder. The edge of the blade bone can be seen on the rear, or shall we say the right side of the shoulder, and the arm bone or bottom of the ell on the side toward you.

Slip the knife deep into the meat along the top or smooth side of the shoulder blade. Continue the cut around the right-hand corner to the shank bone, raising a flap of lean meat that can be laid back far enough to expose the full length of the bones. The method is similar to the way most housewives identify the napkin of a house guest who is to be there for a second meal. You've seen her pick up the open corner of the napkin and fold it back. A flap open on two sides and closed on the other two. Peel out the shoulder blade and round shank bone. You now have a cushion of meat open on two adjacent sides with a fine large pocket to hold a tasty stuffing. Whether roasted with or without stuffing, sew the edges of the pocket together before cooking.

"Now, suppose I tell you how to bone the thick loin chops which are so popular for luncheons and dinners. Boning loin chops is really a very simple thing to do. With your sharp, narrow-bladed knife, cut close to the little T-bones in the loin chops and take them out. Wrap the flank end or tail around the solid meat center and skewer together firmly with toothpicks. This is for the split loin. Or, you may do better than this and have double chops cut clear across the unsplit loin. Two miniature T-bone steaks as it were, with the tops of the T's joined together. It is just as easy to cut around these bones as the single T-bone and the double chop is very special indeed. It really is a simple process, as you can see.

"Now, how about a leg of lamb? We always bone a leg of lamb at home. It is surprising how many attractive servings can be made from either a hot or cold boned leg, that can be sliced evenly from end to end. In boning, take out the irregular aitch or pelvic bone at the large end. Cut into the meat on the thinnest or stiffler side, and lay back a flap of meat deep enough to expose the bone and permit its removal. You will have a pocket here for stuffing, too, or the leg may be sewed together and roasted without stuffing.

"Anybody can carve a roast like that. Moreover, you can do it so quickly that you will have an opportunity to enjoy a few bites yourself, before the boys come back for second helpings," concluded Mr. Warner.

Do all these directions seem clear to you? They are to me, because I have a copy of Mr. Warner's talk, with pictures of what he described. On one page, there's an illustration, showing the boning of a lamb shoulder. This shows the unboned lamb shoulder, the ribs being removed from the shoulder, and the lamb shoulder opened "cushion" style to make the pocket and permit removal of blade and arm bones

Then there's another page, showing how to bone a lamb loin chop. There are several extra copies of these directions, with the illustrations. I'll be glad to send them out --- "first come, first served." Just write for Mr. Warner's directions for boning lamb cuts, and I'll know what you mean.

Friday: "Vegetables to Serve With Meats."

#####

